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Chief Operating Officer

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
313 N. Figueroa, Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 240-8101

December 19, 2003

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Director and Chief Medical Officer

Fred Leaf
Chief Operating Officer

SUBJECT: KING-DREW MEDICAL CENTER

Recent reports on patient safety at King-Drew Medical Center (KDMC) have impacted negatively on the community's confidence in the facility. KDMC is a vital source of care to an underserved community and it is imperative that the Department of Health Services (DHS) take decisive actions to restore confidence in the quality and safety of the medical center. Therefore, the Department is taking additional and immediate steps to increase the oversight of the facility and the care delivered there as well as accelerating the pace of reforms.

Accelerating the Pace of Reforms

In order to facilitate a quick turn-around in the operations of KDMC, Fred Leaf, DHS Chief Operating Officer, has assembled a team that will join him full-time for the next several weeks at King-Drew Medical Center. This Crisis Response Team will supplement the activities of the Management Oversight Group and enable immediate decision making and implementation of necessary changes.

Having a strong presence from Health Services Administration is to demonstrate that KDMC is a top priority for the Department. Mr. Leaf and his team will be vested with the authority to bring in necessary resources, consolidate units to improve patient care and ensure appropriate staffing levels.

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As you know, one of the key areas of focus for both the Management Oversight Group and the Crisis Response Team is augmenting nursing in the intensive and critical care/telemetry units at KDMC. The Department has secured additional nursing staff for these units through private nursing registries and will continue to engage these services until such time as the long-term viability of the nursing program at the facility is ensured.

Nursing Turn-Around Team

In order to conduct a thorough assessment of the current nursing staff at KDMC, the County has engaged the services of The Camden Group, a health care consulting and management firm to provide interim nursing leadership at KDMC and to conduct nursing operations improvement assessments.

The team will be headed by Barbara Patton, RN, a veteran turn-around specialist, and Larry Kidd, RN, the former Chief Nursing executive with Alameda County Medical Center. Their combined experience in both private and public large urban hospitals will be a tremendous asset as we restructure nursing services at KDMC. Additional members of their team will conduct an assessment of the skills of the entire nursing staff and coordinate necessary education and training for staff. Another part of the team, will focus on the staffing patterns and assignments of the nursing staff to ensure that there is appropriate patient coverage and the most efficient allocation of resources possible.

Next Steps

Both the team from Health Services Administration and the Nursing Turn-Around Specialists will begin work immediately. Because of the importance of showing measurable progress in improving perceptions of patient safety, Mr. Leaf's team will be providing your Board directly with regular reports.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

TLG/FL:ak

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors